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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: Priority theme: enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalizing world

Statement submitted by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America, HelpAge International, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Baha'i International Community, Foundation for the Rights of the Family, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Confederation of Christian Family Movements, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Psychologists, International Council on Alcohol and Addictions, International Federation for Family Development, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of University Women, International Kolping Society, Italian Centre of Solidarity, New Humanity, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for International and Cultural Affairs) (International Movement of Catholic Students), Salvation Army, Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture, SOS Kinderdorf International, World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, and World Movement of Mothers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and

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European Union of Women, International Association of Charities, and International Inner Wheel, non-governmental organizations on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

We, the international non-governmental organizations listed above, maintain that,

Whereas,

The family is the fundamental institution of society;

Families are important in fostering the individuality of their members as the first school of social relations and of education in human rights and gender equity, as well as a sense of community, and it must be acknowledged that the family requires support for these responsibilities;

The family is a focus of external factors and social changes, and at the same time is an agent for these changes;

Decent living conditions, including adequate income, nutrition and health, are necessary for family well-being;

Family breakdown can also be an important result of poverty and the inability of families to provide for and nurture their children. The family is also currently confronted with the negative effects of globalization and with the impact of sanctions in deprived countries;

At the special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalized world", held in Geneva from 26 to 30 June 2000, a number of speakers expressed the view that, five years after the World Summit, poverty continued to be a scourge for millions of people;

The President of the special session in referring to the plight of the world's children said that their despair had been further exacerbated by the breakdown of the family and by the horror of organized crime and child soldiering;

One of the documents at the special session, on further initiatives for social development, recognized that stable, supportive and nurturing family relationships, supported by communities and professional services, can provide a vital shield against substance abuse, particularly among minors;

The document, while acknowledging that various forms of the family exist in different cultural and social systems, recognized that the family plays a key role in social development and is a strong force of social cohesion and integration;

We, therefore,

1. Ask the United Nations and the Governments of the world to centre their attention, as a priority issue, on ways and means to eradicate poverty in the world in the nearest possible future;

2. Demand that greater attention be paid to helping families in their supporting, educating and nurturing roles and in combating the causes and consequences of family disintegration;

3. Emphasize that social support should especially meet the needs of disadvantaged and poor families as well as families with ageing or disabled members. It should assist women and men to reconcile employment and family life and responsibilities, provide flexible working hours for parents who participate in the labour force, as well as quality child-care facilities, and social security should also make provisions for those who choose to work and care for the family at home;

4. Urge that children be protected against all kinds of exploitation and trafficking, sexual abuse, domestic violence and the consequences of armed conflict, and that families be supported to ensure a safe and stable environment for their children;

5. Request that family issues be mainstreamed into United Nations programmes related to social development and, especially, to issues impinging on the family, such as poverty, illiteracy, inadequate housing and social services, age and disability, drug and alcohol dependence, diseases and an unhealthy environment;

6. Propose that the Family Unit within the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, be supported and enhanced so as to encourage and facilitate the collaboration with specialized agencies and other organizations in family and social issues;

7. Welcome the initiative to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004. We, as non-governmental organizations, are prepared to collaborate fully with the Family Unit in the preparations for, and observance of, the tenth anniversary.